

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 and 16-21 are currently pending. Claims 5-15 have been canceled without prejudice; and Claims 16-19 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 9-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,524,893 to Kawazoe et al. (hereinafter “the ‘893 patent”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,021,694 to Toshiro et al. (hereinafter “the ‘694 patent”); Claims 16-19 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form; and Claims 1-4, 20, and 21 were allowed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 9-15 are rendered moot by the present cancellation of those claims.

Further, Applicants note that Claims 16-19 have been rewritten in independent form, based on the indicated allowability of those claims.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1 and 16-21 (and all associated dependent claims) are in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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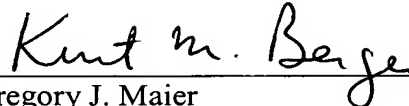
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